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[Book review]

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DAVID LAMBERT and PETER MERRIMAN, eds. *Empire and Mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Studies in Imperialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. Pp. 248. \$120.00 (cloth).

This collection of essays, edited by geographers David Lambert and Peter Merriman, puts the topical question of mobility and immobility at the center of analysis in the study of the British Empire. Together they explore the complex question of how British imperialism participated in the remaking of the world's mobilities from the mid-to-late eighteenth century to the interwar period. The central argument of the volume is that scholars of empires should engage more with the burgeoning, interdisciplinary field of mobility studies as a source of theoretical and methodological inspiration. The introduction provides a thorough analysis of how different themes connected with mobilities have been addressed in existing historical scholarship of the empire. Written in a highly accessible style, Lambert and Merriman finely point out the interconnections between research on mobilities and imperial histories. Through such positioning, the book argues that rigorous historical research can advance mobilities scholarship and shows that there is already much that mobility scholars may learn from histories of the empire. In addition, the Lambert and Merriman cast the volume as a model for future studies of other empires and transimperial mobilities.

These are admirable goals, which the following chapters and the afterword do their best to support by engaging with the conceptual tools of mobility studies in a varying manner. Written by historians and geographers with wide-ranging expertise, the case studies take the reader across the British Empire. Several chapters address how forms of mobility constituted the production of knowledge and how knowledges moved in their various material forms (such as books, writings, plants, visual material). Huw J. Davies examines linear and polysynchronous exchanges of military knowledge and insightfully shows how the terrain

was part of the complex network of knowledge production. Innes Keighren unfolds the different mobilities that defined the production, reception, and credibility of William Macintosh's writings on the reformation of colonial governance in India. Sarah Thomas explores the roles of mobile images in the production of imperial knowledge and argues that the elimination of signs of mobility from the images produced during the circumnavigation of Australia was crucial for their credibility. Nuala C. Johnson details the painting and plant collecting practices of Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe in Burma and shows how her class, gender, and position in the British Empire affected her ability to move for knowledge and mobilize the knowledge that she produced. Martin Mahony uses the case of meteorologist Albert Walter to admirably show how the utility of new forms of mobility (airplanes) depended on transforming the geographies of colonial space by extending them to the sky and making them known by producing knowledge about the atmosphere.

The rest of the chapters investigate instances of controlling, utilizing, and representing the (im)mobilities of individuals and things. Natalie Cox revisits the field-cabinet dichotomy in Victorian exploration of central Africa. She effectively employs the concept of micro-movements to go beyond the traditionally articulated juxtaposition between immobile armchair travelers like William Desborough Cooley and mobile explorers like David Livingstone in the processes of geographical knowledge production. Justine Atkinson shows how missionary movements utilized British seamen's mobility in the port of the Guangdong province to assert Christian presence in late nineteenth-century China. Catherine Coleborne focuses on the politics of coerced mobilities in the 1870s New Zealand by analyzing white Europeans' prosecutions for vagrancy and shows the discursive power of laws in making unwanted settler colonial mobilities visible. Liz Millward focuses on the ideals of imperial aeromobility by analyzing the promotional work of the Air League and details how the

realities of air travel—mechanics, weather, politics, gender, and local knowledge—forced airplanes to remain on the ground.

Put together the chapters show the flexibility of mobility as an analytical tool. Not all chapters succeed in detailing how engagement with mobility studies enables going beyond what has already been achieved using other similar concepts (flow, circulation, networks, circuits), but taken together they invite scholars to think what mobilities and immobilities mean in imperial contexts. Despite their wide-ranging scope, however, the volume lacks explicit attention to the many forms of animal and more-than-human mobilities and displacement that British imperialism caused. Similarly, questions of race and ethnicity have been pushed to the background: the people primarily on the move in this volume are white Europeans. This is somewhat surprising considering that the volume seeks to address how the British Empire remade world's mobilities. Even though Tim Cresswell's reflection on the mobilities of the idea of empire in the United States is thought provoking, it leaves the reader wanting for more in terms of conclusion. Indeed, the volume would have benefitted from a critical reflection on what the nine chapters have achieved and how they fit into the broader field of historical scholarship inspired by mobility studies.

Publishing a book about past (im)mobilities strikes a special chord in the context of the current global pandemic that has forced many of us to stay put and has transformed our ability to move between places and spaces in our everyday lives. Indeed, in the past as today, key questions underpinning societal and cultural changes are who and what can be (im)mobile, how and why. *Empire and Mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century* is a diverse collection that addresses these questions with an array of primary sources and methods. It provides a solid introduction to those new to the examination of past mobilities and will undoubtedly inspire further critical research. As many chapters interrogate the mobilities of knowledge, they also speak to the growing field of the history of knowledge. I do hope that

the volume finds its way to the hands of many students of history and geography as well as those of scholars of mobility more generally.

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